

**Claims:**

1. A method of monitoring hygiene compliance, comprising:  
determining whether a person has encountered a monitored piece of  
equipment; and  
5 updating status information associated with the person to indicate that the  
person is contaminated in response to the determining step determining that the  
person has utilized the monitored piece of equipment.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the monitored piece of equipment is  
associated with being contaminated.
- 10 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising  
determining whether the person has utilized a decontamination station; and  
updating status information associated with the person to indicate that the  
person is decontaminated in response to determining that the person has utilized the  
decontamination station.
- 15 4. A method of monitoring hygiene compliance, comprising the steps of:  
monitoring a person;  
monitoring an object;  
associating a status with the person, the status being one of contaminated and  
non-contaminated; and  
20 associating a status with the object, the status being one of contaminated and  
non-contaminated;
5. The method of claim 4, further comprising establishing at least one  
contamination zone, wherein the person is associated with a status of contaminated if  
the person enters a contamination zone.
- 25 6. The method of claim 4, further comprising establishing at least one  
contamination zone, wherein the object is associated with a status of contaminated if  
the object enters a contamination zone.
7. The method of claim 4, wherein the person is associated with a status  
of contaminated when the person encounters an object associated with a status of  
30 contaminated.
8. The method of claim 4, wherein the object is associated with a status  
of contaminated when the object encounters a person associated with a status of  
contaminated.

9. The method of claim 4, wherein the person is associated with a status of non-contaminated when the person encounters a decontamination device, and the object is associated with a status of not contaminated when the object encounters a decontamination device.

5           10. The method of claim 9, wherein the person is considered to have encountered the decontamination device whenever that person is proximate the decontamination device.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein the person is considered to have encountered the decontamination device whenever that person is proximate the decontamination device and the decontamination device is activated.

12. A method of monitoring hygiene compliance, comprising the steps of:  
monitoring an object;  
establishing at least one contamination zone; and  
updating status information associated with the object to indicate that the  
15 object is contaminated in response to the monitoring step determining that the object is in a contamination zone.

13. The method of claim 12, further including the step of updating status information associated with the object to indicate that the object is contaminated in response to the monitoring step determining that the object has encountered a person  
20 who is associated with a status of contaminated.

14. The method of claim 12, further including the step of updating status information associated with the object to indicate that the object is contaminated in response to the monitoring step determining that the object has encountered a another object that is associated with being contaminated.

25           15. A method of monitoring hygiene compliance for a plurality of items including at least one of persons and objects, the method comprising:

tracking a first item;  
establishing at least one contamination zone;  
updating status information associated with the first item if the first item  
30 enters a contamination zone such that the first item is associated with being contaminated;

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updating status information associated with a second item if the second item enters a zone proximate the first item that is associated with being contaminated such that the second item is associated with being contaminated; and

5 updating status information associated with the first item when the first item is subjected to a decontamination process such that the first item is associated with being non-contaminated.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein a violation is logged when one of the first and second items having a status of contaminated enters a contamination zone.

10 17. The method of claim 15, wherein when the first item is associated with being contaminated as a result of entering a particular contamination zone, the contamination of the first item is associated with the particular contamination zone that is a source of the contamination of the item.

15 18. The method of claim 17, wherein when the second item is contaminated by the first item, the second item is also associated with the particular contamination zone that was the source of the contamination of the first item.

19. The method of claim 17, wherein when a contaminated item reenters the particular contamination zone that is associated with the contaminated item as the only source of contamination of the item, a violation fails to be logged.

20 20. The method of claim 17, wherein when a contaminated first item becomes proximate a contaminated second item, the second item being associated with a different contamination zone than the contamination zone associated with the first item, both the first and second items are noted as being doubly contaminated and associated with two contamination zones.

25 21. A method of monitoring hygiene compliance for a plurality of items including at least one of persons and objects, the method comprising:

tracking a first item;

tracking a second item;

assigning a status to the first item indicating whether the first item is one of contaminated and non-contaminated; and

30 assigning a status to the second item indicating whether the second item is one of contaminated and non-contaminated, wherein if the first item encounters the second item and one of the first and second items is assigned a status of contaminated, then the other of the first and second items is also assigned a status of contaminated.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the first item is considered to have encountered the second item when the two items are within a defined proximity of one another for a defined period of time.

23. The method of claim 21, wherein the second item is a patient.

5 24. The method of claim 21, wherein if the first item is contaminated before encountering the second item, the encounter causes a violation to be logged.

25. The method of monitoring hygiene compliance in items including at least one of persons and objects including the steps of:

establishing at least one contamination zone;

10 tracking a plurality of items;

associating a first item with a status of contaminated when the first item enters a contamination zone; and

15 associating a second item with a status of contaminated when the second item encounters the first item and the first item is associated with the status of contaminated during the encounter.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the first item must stay within the contamination zone for a predetermined period of time before it is associated with the status of contaminated.

20 27. A method of monitoring hygiene compliance in items including at least one of persons and objects including the steps of:

tracking a plurality of items;

associating a first item with a second item;

associating a third item with the second item; and

25 logging a violation unless the second item is decontaminated before being associated with the third item.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the first item is a first patient, the second item is an object, and the third item is a second patient.

30 29. The method of claim 27, wherein the tracking step includes the monitoring of the second item to determine if the second item is subjected to a decontamination process.

30. The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of updating status information associated with the second item to a contaminated status after it is associated with the first item.